

B.7 INFILTRATION BASINS**DESCRIPTION**

An infiltration basin is a surface pond which captures first-flush stormwater and treats it by allowing it to percolate into the ground and through permeable soils. As the stormwater percolates into the ground, physical, chemical, and biological processes occur which remove both sediments and soluble pollutants. Pollutants are trapped in the upper layers of the soil, and the water is then released to groundwater. Infiltration basins are generally used for drainage areas between 5 and 50 acres (Boutiette and Duerring, 1994). For drainage areas less than 5 acres, an infiltration trench or other BMP may be more appropriate. For drainage areas greater than 50 acres, maintenance of an infiltration basin would be burdensome, and an extended/dry detention basin or wet pond may be more appropriate. Infiltration basins are generally dry except immediately following storms, but a low-flow channel may be necessary if a constant base flow is present.

Infiltration basins create visible surface ponds that dissipate because water is infiltrated through the pond bottom; infiltration trenches hide surface drainage in underground void regions and the water is infiltrated below the rocks. Infiltration basins effectively remove soluble pollutants because processes such as adsorption and biological processes remove these soluble pollutants from stormwater. This kind of treatment is not always available in other kinds of BMPs.

Several types of infiltration basins exist. They can be either in-line or off-line, and may treat different volumes of water, such as the water quality volume or the 2-year or 10-year storm. A full infiltration basin is built to hold the entire water quality volume, and the only outlet from the pond is an emergency spillway. More commonly used is the combined infiltration/detention basin, where the outflow is controlled by a vertical riser. Excess flow volume spills over the drop inlet at the top of the riser, and very large storms will exit through the emergency spillway. Other types of basins include the side-by-side basin, and the off-line infiltration basin. The side by side basin consists of a basin with an elevated channel to carry base flows running along one of its sides. Storm flows also flow through the elevated channel, but overflow the channel and enter the basin when they become deep enough. An off-line infiltration basin is used to treat the first flush runoff, while higher flows remain in the main channel.

ADVANTAGES

1. High removal capability for particulate pollutants and moderate removal for soluble pollutants.

2. Groundwater recharge helps to maintain dry-weather flows in streams.
3. Can minimize increases in runoff volume.
4. When properly designed and maintained, it can replicate pre-development hydrology more closely than other BMP options.
5. Basins provide more habitat value than other infiltration systems.

LIMITATIONS

1. High failure rate due to clogging and high maintenance burden.
2. Low removal of dissolved pollutants in very coarse soils.
3. Not suitable on fill slopes or steep slopes.
4. Risk of groundwater contamination in very coarse soils, may require groundwater monitoring.
5. Should not be used if significant upstream sediment load exists.
6. Slope of contributing watershed needs to be less than 20 percent.
7. Not recommended for discharge to a sole source aquifer.
8. Cannot be located within 100 feet of drinking water wells.
9. Metal and petroleum hydrocarbons could accumulate in soils to potentially toxic levels.
10. Relatively large land requirement.
11. Only feasible where soil is permeable and there is sufficient depth to bedrock and water table.
12. Need to be located a minimum of 10 feet down gradient and 100 feet up gradient from building foundations because of seepage problems.
13. Infiltration facilities could fall under Chapter 15, Title 23, of California Code of Regulations regarding waste disposal to land.

DESIGN CRITERIA

Designing an infiltration basin is a process in which several factors are examined. The soil type and the drainage area are important factors in infiltration basin design. If either one of these two is inappropriate, the infiltration basin will not function properly. The steps in the design of an infiltration basin are listed below.

1. *Drainage Area.* Drainage areas between 5 and 50 acres are good candidates for infiltration basins. Infiltration trenches might be more appropriate for smaller drainage areas, while retention ponds are more appropriate for larger drainage areas (Schueler, 1987).
2. *Soils.* The site must have the appropriate soil, or the basin will not function properly. It is important that the soil be able to accept water at a minimum infiltration rate. Soils with an infiltration rate of less than 0.3 inches per hour, are not suitable sites for

infiltration basins. Soils with a high percentage of clay are also undesirable, and should not be used if the percentage of clay is greater than 30. Generally, areas with fine to moderately fine soils are prevalent should not be considered as sites, because these soils do not have a high infiltration rate. Soils with greater than 40 percent combined silt/clay also should not be used. A series of soil cores should be taken to a depth of at least 5 feet below the proposed basin floor elevation to determine which kinds of soils are prevalent at the potential site.

3. *Volume.* Calculate the volume of stormwater to be mitigated by the infiltration basin using the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works *Method for Calculating Standard Urban Stormwater Mitigation Plan (SUSMP) Flow Rates and Volumes Based on 0.75-inches of Rainfall*.
4. *Slope.* The basin floor should be as flat as possible to ensure an even infiltration surface and should not be or greater than 5 percent slope. Also, side slopes should have a maximum slope of 3 horizontal to 1 vertical (Schueler, 1987).
5. *Vegetation.* Vegetation should be established as soon as possible. Water-tolerant reed canary grass or tall fescue should be planted on the floor and side slopes of the basin (Schueler, 1987). Root penetration and thatch formation maintains and sometimes improves infiltration capacity of the basin floor. Also, the vegetation helps to trap the pollutants by growing through the accumulated sediment and preventing resuspension. The vegetation also helps reduce pollution levels by taking up soluble nutrients for growth and converting them into less available pollutant forms.
6. *Inlet.* Sediment forebays or riprap aprons should be installed to reduce flow velocities and trap sediments upon entrance to the basin. Flow should be evenly distributed over the basin floor by a riprap apron. The inlet pile or channel should enter the basin at floor level to prevent erosion (Schueler, 1987).
7. *Drainage Time.* The basin should completely drain within 24 hours to avoid the risk of it not being empty before the next storm. Overestimation of the future infiltration capacity can result in a standing water problem. Ponds with detention times of less than six hours are not effectively removing pollutants from the storm flows (Schueler, 1987). The most common problem is setting the elevation and size of the low-flow orifice. If the orifice is too large, runoff events pass through the basin too quickly. If the low-flow orifice diameter is too narrow, there is a risk of creating an undesirable quasi-permanent pool.
8. *Buffer Zone.* A 25 foot buffer should be placed between the edge of the basin floor, and the nearest adjacent lot (Schueler, 1987). The buffer should consist of water tolerant, native plant species that provide food and cover for wildlife. This buffer zone may also act as a screen if necessary.
9. *Access.* Access to the basin floor should be provided for light equipment (Schueler, 1987).
10. *Water Table.* The basin floor should be a minimum of 10 feet above the water table.

11. *Maximum Depth.* The maximum allowable depth is equal to the infiltration rate multiplied by the maximum allowable dewatering time (24 hours).
12. *Freeboard.* A minimum of 2 feet of freeboard should be available between the spillway crest and the top of the dam (Dormann, et al., 1988).
13. *Emergency Spillway.* The emergency spillway should be able to safely pass the 100-year flood.
14. *Surface Area of the Basin Floor.* If the surface area of the basin floor is increased, the infiltration rate and quantity of runoff which can be infiltrated will be increased. Larger surface areas can also help compensate for clogging on the surface.

REFERENCES

1. L. N. Boutiette and C. L. Duerring, 1994. *Massachusetts Nonpoint Source Management Manual, The Megamanual: A Guidance Document for Municipal Officials*, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Watershed Management, Nonpoint Source Program, Boston, MA.
2. Camp, Dresser and McKee, Inc., Larry Walker Associates, 1993. *California Best Management Practices - Municipal*, California State Water Resources Council Board, Alameda, CA.
3. M. E. Dormann, J. Hartigan, and B. Maestri, 1988. *Retention, Detention, and Overland Flow for Pollutant Removal from Highway Stormwater Runoff: Interim Guidelines for Management Measures*, FHWA/RD-87/056, Federal Highway Administration, Versar, Inc., Springfield, VA.
4. GKY and Associates, Inc. June 1996. *Evaluation and Management of Highway Runoff Water Quality*, Publication No. FHWA-PD-96-032. Prepared for: US Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration. Washington, DC.
5. T.R. Schueler, 1987. *Controlling Urban Runoff: A Practical Manual for Planning and Designing Urban BMPs*, Department of Environmental Programs, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, Washington, DC.
6. Ventura Countywide Stormwater Quality Management Program, *Draft BMP IN: Infiltration Facilities*, June 1999. Ventura, CA.

The following is a known location where an Infiltration Basin was installed. The design of the installed basin in the location may vary from what is recommended in this SUSMP due to its specific circumstances. Los Angeles County does not endorse nor warranty any design used in the location herein. Each individual case may require that the design be tailored to perform properly.

Installed Location (City/Address)	Brand/Manufacturer	Owner/Client
I 605/SR 91	N/A	Caltrans